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# **THE AFRICAN CAPACITY FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO CONFLICT AND THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE: OPTIONS FOR PEACE INTERVENTION IN AFRICA**

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# THE AFRICAN CAPACITY FOR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO CONFLICT AND THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE: OPTIONS FOR PEACE INTERVENTION IN AFRICA

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The conflict that engulfed Mali in 2012, prompting the intervention of the African Union (AU), was brought about by a complex and multidimensional mixture of long-term, fundamental grievances by diverse groups within the Malian state. Three distinct but interrelated conditions coalesced to produce this crisis. First were the secessionist tendencies of the Tuareg in northern Mali, favoring an independent state of Azawad (Devon 2013, 2; Francis 2013, 3; Keys 2013, 3). Second was a political crisis that, aggravated by the military coup in 2012, further weakened the Malian state and heightened Tuareg rebel hopes of secession (Affa'a-Mindzie and Perry 2013, 4). And third was the hijacking of this Tuareg nationalist process by Islamist jihadists, who attempted to take over Mali and establish a terrorist state based on Sharia law (Guzman 2014, 1; Reeve and Pelter 2014, 2–4)—a development that prompted intervention in the Malian crisis by the AU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU), France, and the United States. This display of international political will played a pivotal role in halting the terrorist advance.

For the AU, claims that the West African Standby Brigade (WASB)—the West African arm of its long-awaited African Standby Force (ASF)—was one of three armed forces ready for deployment proved false. This disappointment

gave rise to the creation of an ad hoc force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). With the ASF still in planning, the ACIRC became a permanent feature, thereby leaving the AU with two untested intervention forces. With its lean resources unable to meet the demands of its peace support operations (PSOs), the AU cannot maintain two intervention forces when it has not even solved the issue of activating and sustaining the first; and while the introduction of the ASF was generally welcomed, AU members and donors have remained divided over the ACIRC.

This paper will examine this situation and argue that if, despite its lapses, the present ad hoc arrangement—whereby countries contribute troops as the need arises—has worked so far, efforts should be concentrated on honing this approach and on reinforcing the factors that have been at the center of AU peacekeeping successes. They include the exercise of international political will, the cooperation of domestic political elites, and the involvement of the local population in the peace process. Since analyzing all six AU missions to show the salience of these factors to the success of peace operations would be difficult, emphasis will be on the two failed operations where they were lacking: those in Darfur and the Central African Republic (CAR).

The discussion begins with a look at the problems of the ASF and the inception of the ACIRC through the events of the Malian crisis in 2012. Scholars have proffered reasons the ASF has been inoperative (Olonisakin 2010, 58), just as they have queried the rationale behind running an ACIRC alongside it (Jobson and Smith 2014, 5). Works on these security mechanisms (especially the ASF) have treated them as given, so studies have focused intensely on their structure and workability (see Dersso 2010, 6–7; Williams 2011, 10–11; Warner 2015, 59–60). Seldom has any discussion really queried the necessity of these mechanisms vis-à-vis peacekeeping effectiveness or broached such questions as whether the force of numbers—the possession of a combat-ready force—is the tonic for peace operations success. If it is, then the concept of the ASF and ACIRC can be lauded; but if it is not, as an increasing number of scholars argue, then the time and effort put into these mechanisms should be ploughed into factors with more impact on success.

The examination here of the AU missions in Darfur and CAR will drive this point home. As these operations have shown, no matter how well trained, equipped, and determined an intervention force is, it cannot coerce into a peace process people and movements that are not ready for it (Guehenno 2008, 3–4). Rather than continuing to spend resources on trying to activate

these standby forces, the focus should be on those factors with greater impact on peace operations effectiveness. Topping the list are host government support, the sustaining of international political will, and local participation.

The conclusion, in short, will be that the AU has done just fine as the continent's peacekeeper without the ASF or ACIRC.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF MALI'S 2012 CONFLICT**

Before the 2012 crisis that necessitated international military intervention, Mali had experienced Tuareg rebellions, fueled by the neglect of the Malian state and a desire for self-determination, in 1962 and 1990 (Lode 2002, 59; Meredith 2006, 276). The third rebellion, which culminated in the 2012 crisis, was not so much a rebellion as an insurgency, in which members of the Malian military were kidnapped and killed. It began in May 2006, when a group of Tuareg army deserters attacked military barracks in the Kidal region, seizing weapons and demanding greater autonomy and development assistance (Devon 2013). Despite the government's attempts to quell it, the insurgency gathered pace in 2007 and was further exacerbated by an influx of arms from the 2011 Libyan civil war (BBC News 2014).

The Tuareg string of successes under the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) continued into January 17, 2012, when the rebels launched successful attacks on Malian army posts in the north. Embarrassed by its defeat and angry at the political class for a perceived lack of support, the military staged a coup on March 22, ousting the government of Amadou Toumani Touré (Haysom 2014, 3; International Crisis Group 2012). The resulting power vacuum provided the impetus for the MNLA in April 2012 to declare an independent state of Azawad, which supposedly covered 60 percent of Mali's land area (Affa'a-Mindzie and Perry 2013, 4). By mid-July 2012, most major towns, such as Timbukto, Kidal, and Gao, were under Islamist control.

### *International Intervention*

The first outside party to respond to the Malian crisis was ECOWAS, which denounced the coup and urged the junta to relinquish power to the rightful government immediately. The AU initially limited its efforts to supporting ECOWAS, which sought to treat the issue as a regional affair. In a bid to counter the insurgency threat, ECOWAS members met in Nigeria in June

2012 and decided to launch a coordinated military operation to recapture rebel-occupied areas of the north (BBC News 2014). This was to be achieved through the ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICEMA). MICEMA never went beyond the planning stages, however. Obstacles to its activation included the Malian junta's hostility to a foreign armed presence in Bamako and a lack of consensus with Algeria (a non-ECOWAS state) (Theroux-Benoni 2013, 1). It was just as well, as logistical and financial constraints made its deployment impossible in the absence of international support requested by ECOWAS, which the UN had twice refused to provide (Ewi 2012, 2).

From June 2012, the AU began playing a more active role and made some progress in its mediation efforts. First, differences with the Malian actors were overcome, allowing the development of a harmonized concept of operations (CONOPS) that gave the Malian army the lead role in the envisaged military operation. Then the AU sought to allay Algeria's reluctance by making MICEMA a continental initiative, transforming it into the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). Although the transition from MICEMA to AFISMA was marked by tension between ECOWAS and the AU, the two worked with one another under the subsidiarity provisions of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to present a united front and a collaborative response in Mali (Theroux-Benoni 2013, 2).

Finally, in collaboration with the Malian government and ECOWAS and other international actors, the AU developed a strategic concept that framed the military action from a more global perspective to facilitate the provision of support by the UN (Theroux-Benoni 2013, 2).

### *The AU and Its Intervention Mechanisms in Mali*

AFISMA was to be drawn from the West African Standby Brigade (WASB), which is the West African arm of the African Standby Force (ASF). The ASF is supposed to comprise a 25,000-troop contingency force, divided into 5,000-troop contingents that are roughly aligned to each of the five regions—north, central, east, west, and south. The concept has hit some major challenges since it was initiated in 2002 (Marshall 2009, 5; Williams 2011, 10). Had the ASF been ready to deploy in 2012, the mission in Mali would have been its first test case.

Three developments came about as a result of the ASF's operational delays. First, the insurgents capitalized on the time AFISMA took to lumber

into operation and advanced toward Bamako on January 10, 2013, twenty days after the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2085 authorizing its deployment. The incursion of Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) into northern Mali put it in control of a million square kilometers of territory bordering four other countries. Alarmed at the capture of Konna, the Malian government sought France's help (Theroux-Benoni 2013, 2; BBC News 2014).

This call for help prompted the second development, which was France's deployment of Operation Serval on January 11, 2013. With 4,000 troops, Operation Serval dramatically altered the dynamics of the military situation and greatly influenced international response. By the end of January, all the major population centers in northern Mali had been retaken and the rebels displaced (Boutellis and Williams 2013, 3; Reeve and Pelter 2014, 3).

Meanwhile, to show it was responsible and up to the challenge despite being unable to activate the ASF, the AU (in the third development) resorted to its ad hoc approach of assembling troops from a coalition of willing countries. AFISMA's deployments were from troop-contributing countries (TCCs) that had volunteered to go into Mali (Curtis interview 2014). Nigeria was the first to deploy troops, on January 17, 2013. By January 31, within two weeks of mobilization, AFISMA had approximately 1,400 troops in place, drawn from Chad and the ECOWAS region (UN Security Council 2013). The boost this provided to the stabilization process in Mali prompted discussions in April of AFISMA's 7,464 troops re-hatting into a 12,600-strong UN peacekeeping mission (Boutellis and Williams 2013, 3; African Union 2013, 5). On July 1, authority was transferred from the AU to the UN, and forces from AFISMA officially donned the blue berets of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (UN News Centre 2013).

In sum, the ad hoc approach was sufficient for addressing the crisis in Mali.

### **FILLING THE GAP CREATED BY AN UNREADY ASF: THE CASE OF MALI**

Although the AU has spent twelve years now trying to get the ASF up and running, it still exists more as a concept than an operational facility (Curtis interview 2014). Few have hope that the revised date of 2015 for its takeoff will be actualized. But despite the time, planning, and finance ploughed into it, one wonders if such a force is really the magic wand for success in AU PSOs.

While the ASF concept is laudable, the issue of its incapacity in Mali led to the AU's tinkering with a new concept—an interim, smaller, more manageable, more affordable, and more flexible force (International Peace Institute 2013, 5). In May 2013, it came up with the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) to fill the gap before the ASF took off. Even after the ASF's activation, the smaller, more flexible ACIRC would be faster to mobilize into conflict zones before ASF contingents were ready to deploy. The report of the Commission on the Operationalisation of the Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) of the ASF and the Establishment of an ACIRC, which was adopted in May 2013, explains the need for the ACIRC thus:

It is obvious that the existence of a truly operational capability at continental level would have enabled Africa to play a more effective role on the ground and assert its leadership. . . . For this reason, a transitional formula should be considered, which would provide Africa with [an] urgently needed operational collective and security instrument. . . . Such a formula would constitute the ACIRC. . . . The aim is to establish an efficient, robust and credible force, which can be deployed very rapidly, able to conduct operations of limited duration and objectives or contribute to creating enabling conditions for the deployment of larger AU and/or UN peace operations. (African Union 2013, 7)

Opinion on the ACIRC is divided among experts and AU member states. On the one hand, Algeria, Chad, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda have been major enthusiasts; on the other, Ethiopia and Nigeria, beyond verbal support, have shown reluctance in pursuing this course (Fabricius 2013, 2–3; IRIN News 2014). Although a department has been created within the AU Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) to cater to the operationalization of the ACIRC, not everyone within the AU sees the rationale. Those who don't argue that if a major reason for the creation of the ASF is to enable rapid deployment to conflict areas, the arguments put forward for the ACIRC seem weak. The creation of the ACIRC has been described by scholars and experts as “reinventing the wheel” (IRIN News 2014).

A major criticism leveled at the AU concerns its ambition to have two conflict machineries running when it has been unable to activate one. Those holding this view note, too, that “plans for the two forces have caused some delays and confusion . . . and that ‘the ACIRC may draw attention away from,

and undermine the investment put into the ASF so far” (Solomon Dersso quoted in *Africa Report* 2014). Also called into question is the ability of the AU to finance both facilities in view of its heavy dependence on external funding. And some contend that, rather than create a new bureaucracy, the AU should have accelerated the establishment of the ASF. After all, at its 341st meeting on November 13, 2012, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) noted with satisfaction “the decision of ECOWAS to maintain its standby brigade in advanced readiness for imminent deployment” (African Union Peace and Security Council 2012).

These critics were in some consensus that, in light of the burden of having two forces when getting one to function had been difficult, time, effort, and resources should be directed at developing the ASF and getting it operational. The majority support for the ASF is understandable; even so, arguments opting for the ACIRC instead can also be tendered.

## **WHY THE ASF AND NOT THE ACIRC**

Since its inception in May 2013, the ACIRC has been greeted with mixed reactions by scholars, security experts, and bureaucrats. Even within the AU, opinion about it is divided. Tony Curtis, senior military advisor of the US mission to the AU, gives this insight:

When the AU first made this new concept public and briefed it to the Ministers and the Chiefs of Defence prior to the AU summit, the idea was slammed. The Ministers and Chiefs did not like it . . . but lo and behold, they have the actual AU summit, they bring it up to the presidents, and the Heads of State overwhelmingly approve of it. They approve something their Chiefs and Ministers rejected. (Tony Curtis interview 2014)

Amid this seeming stalemate, the Gambari Report, which gave life to the ACIRC and posited it could be run alongside the ASF, seemed to represent a middle ground, meant to pacify the chiefs of defense and heads of AU member states. Such political compromise was against the expectations of most experts. For, as Curtis puts it, “Anyone would suspect that the Commission would go in and look at the ASF and the ACIRC, compare them, evaluate them, contrast them and then make a determination on which one was the better course of action.” (Curtis interview 2014)

Based on this assessment, most have opted for the ASF over the ACIRC. The reasons have anchored on the amount of time and resources already ploughed into the ASF and the overwhelming approval it got from inception. Additionally, the belief that the ACIRC is a reinvention of the wheel and would likely draw attention away from, and undermine the investment put into, the ASF makes it unappealing (*Africa Report* 2014, 4; IRIN News 2014, 2). Also at issue is who bears the brunt of financing the ACIRC in view of the difficulties faced in financing the ASF.

Other salient reasons make the ASF a preferable mechanism. As noted by Paul Williams (2011, 10), the regional brigades are expected to be active within their regions. Hussein Solomon (2012, 23) points out that this reduces the stress on operations, such as strategic airlifts, that arise from a lack of capability. It also affords the advantage of increased knowledge of local conditions. Such knowledge has not always served PSOs well, however, as national interest considerations sometimes prompt neighboring states that are part of these operations to undertake actions inimical to their success. Examples include Kenya and Ethiopia, key members of the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which are interested in a balkanised or weak Somalia and not one united under a strong central government (Møller 2009, 20; Solomon 2012, 23). The same logic can be gleaned from the similar role played by the Chadian contingent under the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) in supporting the Seleka rebels and its complicity in civilian deaths (Wood 2014, 6).

One major advantage of the ASF over the ACIRC is its built-in force integrity (based on high levels of military professionalism, service, and personal integrity, including qualities such as ethical conduct, courage, accountability, and transparency), which is a major ingredient for efficacy in PSOs and other security operations. Force integrity and task cohesion are largely augmented by the cultural and social affinity prevalent within security forces (Møller 2005, 5; Lee 2005, 84–85). Experts also hold that “when ‘peacekeepers’ share the same or similar culture as the disputants, the chances of conflicts terminating successfully are higher than if they come from totally different cultures” (Leeds 2001, 103). On the benefits of cultural and social affinity for a regional force, Franke notes, “The regional character of the ASF ensures that the RECs [Regional Economic Communities] feel ownership in the process of establishing a continental security architecture, while at the same time strengthening their institutional links with the AU” (Franke 2007, 14).

Conversely, the wide cultural and social diversity of the ACIRC, which, for now, has twelve participating countries contributing 5,000 troops from areas as diverse as Angola and Guinea, Ethiopia, and Senegal (*Africa Confidential* 2014), does not augur well for mission efficacy:

If you make a troop contingent with many nations it is much weaker. In some theoretical instances the total is greater than the sum of the parts; the reverse applies with troops. The more contingents you have the weaker it is. You have obviously got difference in language, logistics, fighting method, all sorts of things (Ellery interview 2013).

This is because the greater the diversity, the weaker the bond that motivates the coordination of efforts to achieve set goals (Lee 2005, 84–85).

Consequently, an intervention force made up of troops from the same region is likely to be more effective than one made up from different regions or distant areas of the continent. At its contingent peak of 19,555 troops, the hybrid UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) had as many as forty-seven TCCs—a vast number that spells a lack of force integrity. This gave rise to diverse modes of operation and different interests within UNAMID and hindered its efficiency (Pavšič 2013, 3). In contrast, an ASF brigade assembled from member states within an REC is bound to have greater force integrity, and it will likely be more efficient than an ACIRC with all its diversity.

## **WHY THE ACIRC AND NOT THE ASF**

Putting aside the matter of time and resources already invested in the ASF, the following arguments show why opting for the ACIRC makes more sense.

First, formation of the ASF has been going on for a very long time, with no end in sight. According to a 2013 report, “The ASF operationalisation was planned for 2008, pushed to 2010, then 2013 and now to 2015. . . . Security experts doubt that the force will be operational by then” (*East African* 2013). This was confirmed by Ibrahim Gambari, who, in leading a panel assessing the readiness of the ASF in 2014, told the AU the force would not be ready by its 2015 deadline (*Africa Report* 2014, 3). The three regions whose brigades have purportedly reached operational status are still the only ones ready; North and Central Africa have yet to develop theirs. The inability of

the ASF to be called into service after twelve years gives credence to the development of a more manageable alternative.

In contrast, in February 2015 South African president Jacob Zuma proposed putting the ACIRC into service against Boko Haram in Nigeria (Fabricius 2015, 1). Though turned down, the offer indicated that, approximately two years after it was conceived, the ACIRC might be combat ready and possessed of rapid deployment capability—in other words, a robust military force that could be deployed within fourteen days (Cilliers 2008, 4).

One among the many reasons given for the state of the ASF is that for the force to be operational, all five regional brigades have to be combat ready (Fabricius 2013, 3). Security analysts explain that the tardiness of the north and central regions in establishing standby brigades has frustrated plans to activate the continental force (*East African* 2013). At the ASF's inception in 2004, the brigades were originally planned to operate outside their regions, but now the ASF planners intend each to deploy only within its region (Williams 2011, 10). Under this latter dispensation, the unpreparedness of the north and central brigades may no longer be a cogent excuse for the ASF's inertia; and, in either case, the ACIRC still has the advantage.

Consider the first scenario, where the inability of two regions to develop their brigades stalls the activation of the ASF. From all indications, a brigade for North Africa will likely not be ready in the long term; in fact, it may never be. With Morocco standing on the fringes of AU affairs and troubled enclaves like Libya and Egypt looking to the West and to Middle Eastern brothers rather than the AU for support (Reuters 2014; *Arab American* 2015), the likelihood of a North African Regional Brigade coming to fruition is slim. Save for the support provided by Libya and Morocco to the AU's Operation Democracy in the Comoros (Massey and Baker 2009, 15; Vines 2013, 100), North African states have been virtually nonparticipants in AU PSOs (IRIN News 2014, 4). Although Egypt has been a part of the hybrid UNAMID, it was not a part of its precursor mission, the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) (see Williams 2011, 15). This trend, linked with the exhortation that "the AU must ensure that any country that it selects to build capacity also has the will to deploy the capacity to support peace operations" (Marshall 2009, 18), explains the lack of urgency in setting up the North African Brigade. Under this scenario, the more centrally controlled ACIRC becomes a much more pragmatic peacekeeping mechanism.

Under the second scenario—the current concept of the ASF, where regional brigades deploy only within their regions—the question is what happens when conflicts occur in regions without brigades, such as Central Africa and CAR? Addressing conflicts in these areas would likely bring the AU back to its ad hoc approach of soliciting willing TCCs for troops. Again, the ACIRC, which is open for deployment anywhere on the continent, seems a better option.

Without doubt, the ASF itself is a complex mechanism, which might explain why certain issues about it are still hazy. For example, why would ECOWAS opt for MICEMA in Mali when WASB had been deemed combat ready since 2012? Interestingly, the decentralization of command and autonomy of the regional brigades count as advantages of the ASF in consonance with the argument concerning burden sharing and the benefit of knowing the terrain and politics of the area better (Møller 2005, 5; Bogland et al. 2008, 37). That a few countries' membership overlaps into other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should not be adduced as one of the many complexities that has made the ASF moribund (see Moolakkattu 2010, 156). The ACIRC however, has been touted as an easier, smaller, and less complex intervention mechanism that doesn't come with the baggage of the ASF, and, being centrally run, the affiliation of TCCs with different RECs does not arise.

Finally to be considered is the subsidiarity principle, which goes way back to the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII in 1891 (Møller 2005, 3); it was introduced into the EU by the 1991 Maastricht Treaty and adopted by the AU in 2007 (African Union 2007, 15–17). Subsidiarity in this case involves the devolution of certain roles and powers from continental institutions to regional/national ones. (That the EU and AU both embraced subsidiarity is not surprising when, in many respects, the latter is modeled after the former.)

As a major aim of the subsidiarity principle is to regulate the powers of the central authority in relationship to its units, it advocates that the center not take action except in matters for which it alone is responsible, or when action by the center is certain to be more effective than that taken at the unit level. In effect, this tenet only applies when the center and the units both have competence in the area under dispute (Møller 2005, 4; De Sousa 2013, 60). For this reason, the subsidiarity principle is said to give priority to the units. The responsibility is passed to the center only when the unit has shown its inability to deliver and to do so efficiently (Schilling 1995, 2).

Subsidiarity has been proposed as the main principle for governing the interinstitutional relationship between the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the AU and its RECs. The relationship consists of three facets: decisionmaking, division of labor, and burden sharing. Apparently, the notions of division of labor and burden sharing are attractive. Within the AU, however, consensus is lacking on how they are to be implemented (De Sousa 2013, 1; Bam interview 2014). This confusion is not surprising; even within the EU, “the subsidiarity principle is seen as a double edged sword which prevents both the higher and the lower level from taking action in areas properly falling within each other’s respective sphere of action” (Schilling 1995, 2). The propensity for inaction because of the overlapping responsibilities of its central and regional commands has been a major issue with the ASF ever since it was conceived (Bogland et al. 2008, 37).

In contrast, the ACIRC, like current PSOs where command is centralized in the AU, is free of the drawbacks of subsidiarity and interinstitutional hegemonic tussles. “The ACIRC does not belong to any of the RECs,” says US senior military advisor Curtis. “It reports directly to the AU, so it cuts the RECs out of the decision making cycle. It also makes it easier for the AU to deploy them because they are deployed at the behest of the AU Peace and Security Council” (Tony Curtis interview 2014).

## **NEITHER THE ASF NOR THE ACIRC**

Neither the ASF nor the ACIRC has been activated in combat, yet the AU has had its fair share of PSO successes—an outcome that implies AU PSOs work without these mechanisms. Even the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB), which was grossly underresourced in terms of personnel and materials and conducted in a fairly hostile environment, brought stability to approximately 95 percent of the country and succeeded to a great extent in protecting civilians, even those who were internally displaced (Aboagye 2004, 14; Powell 2005, 3; Rodt 2011, 11). Scholars have attributed the success of this mission to the tenacity of international political will shown by the AU and South Africa, which was the lead state; to Burundi’s political elite, who succumbed to international pressure to seek peace; and to a war-weary population willing to support the peace (see African Union 2003, 2; Powell 2005, 28; Ogunsanya 2007, 29; Boshoff, Vrey, and Rautenbach 2010, 28; Wolpe 2011, 69–70).

The critical missing ingredient in providing stability and security in Africa is not a continental army but urgent reforms within national governments

and a change in doctrine of their security forces to make their highest priority civilian protection rather than regime change and the maintenance of public order (Bellamy 2014, 5–6). Responsive governance, public trust, and cooperation are essential for political stability and security, over and above well-funded and well-trained security forces, and the same applies to peacekeeping success. These factors, along with international political will, have together been the major determinants in peacekeeping outcomes.

In discussing these factors that most determine PSO outcomes and should therefore command AU attention over and above the ASF and ACIRC, it is essential first to justify them. This will be done in the next sections through a brief assessment of conditions responsible for the AU's ineptitude in its failed operations, and an examination of the possibility of the ASF's or ACIRC's altering these negative outcomes. While these intervention brigades may not, as is argued here, be necessary for success, this approach tests their capability to avert failure, in which case the time and resources spent on them would be worth the trouble. The missions highlighted are the African Mission in Darfur (AMIS/UNAMID) and CAR (MISCA), both of which scholars generally agree have been peacekeeping failures (Badescu and Bergholm 2009, 300; Gelot 2012, 113; Ingerstad 2014a, 47–48).

## **THE FAILURE IN DARFUR (AMIS AND UNAMID)**

The absence of four factors has been held responsible for the failure of peacekeeping in Darfur. These are precise mandate; cooperation of local political elites; international political will; and local participation. None of these relates to force of numbers or the combat readiness of an intervention force. Ironically, while a report in 2009 attributed the failure of UNAMID to its lack of troops, whose numbers stood at 9,000 at the time, UNAMID remained unable to make a difference at its peak of 19,555 soldiers in 2011 and with 18,510 in 2015 (Badescu and Bergholm 2009, 300; also see <http://unamid.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=10998>). Bureaucrats and scholars agree the problem of Darfur cannot be solved simply by a peace support contingent (Lynch 2014a, 4). The following analysis provides more detail about these factors as related to the Darfur crisis.

### *The Mandate Factor*

The failure of mandate has been a major reason for the problems of peacekeeping in Darfur. First, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that was

negotiated with the government of Sudan severely constrained the operations of the peacekeepers and ceded too much control to the host government (Badescu and Bergholm 2009, 297; Mansaray 2009, 37–38). Furthermore, the conditions arising from the SOFA limited the initiative and the freedom of the operation to act. This created a mismatch between the demands of the environment, the capabilities of the mission, and its mandated predisposition not to use force (Aboagye 2009, 10, 12).

Beyond the mandate's restrictiveness, experts and observers considered it vague and thereby open to various interpretations, which did not augur well for cohesion (Pan 2005; Birikorang 2009, 8). They contended the language on civilian protection, for example, was ambiguous and lacked clear guidelines on how to interpret it, which made commanders hesitant to use force (International Crisis Group 2005, 18). Accounts provided by Colum Lynch (2014a, 1) indicate the mission in Darfur was "set up to fail," and robust military intervention would not have made a difference.

### *The Domestic Politics / Local Political Elite Factor*

Two peacekeeping veterans, James Ellery and Michael Amuzu, averred in separate interviews that a major problem with Darfur was that Sudan was not on the verge of being a failed state and never requested any help. A peacekeeping mission, said Amuzu, should rightly be deployed

at the invitation of an *about to fail government*. When the government is not a failure and it feels it is capable of handling its internal matter, they do not want any peacekeeping mission. That was the case in Sudan. (Amuzu interview 2014; italics added)

Similarly, according to Ellery, "Only when the sovereign state is completely broken down can an international organisation impose itself" (Ellery interview 2013).

This largely explains the government of Sudan's lack of support for UNAMID. And since government structures are still vibrant, its policies that are at odds with peacekeeping guidelines have created a lot of turbulence for the peace support operation—a scenario exemplifying the view that "any attempt to improve peacekeeping will not matter if a country's leaders and resources conspire against peace" (Jett 2001, xxvii; Durant and Weintraub 2014, 523). Every effort, then, should be made to foster trust and

cooperation between national actors and then between national actors and peacekeepers (Langholtz 2010, 48). Arising from the Darfur experience, too, is the observation that robust PSOs, like those the ASF and ACIRC are intended to carry out, do work, but only with some form of political foundation (Guehenno 2008, 4).

### *The Local Participation Factor*

The volatility of the region is attested to by the August 27, 2014, report in which the UN Security Council states it unanimously adopted Resolution 2173,

Expressing deep concern at the serious deterioration in the security situation overall so far in 2014 . . . [and] expressing deep concern at the significant increase in population displacements . . . with an estimated 359,000 newly displaced since January this year . . . alongside more than two million long-term Internally Displaced Persons. (UN Security Council 2014, 2)

And, as some have rightly asserted, in societies without the most basic structure of democracy and observance of human rights, violent acts have horrible implications (Abusharaf 2010, 78). This scenario provides too little room for meaningful local initiatives to maneuver for peace and make a difference in the process.

Experts acknowledge that local popular support is the center of gravity in any peace operation, which can never work when the people for whom it is meant cannot contribute toward it (Lauria 2009, 6; Langholtz 2010, 48). Attaining peace through local capacity initiatives is still considered the most viable way to achieve stability in conflict societies (Metcalfe 2010, 7–8), and, when possible, local actors should be empowered to ensure the sustainability of the peace process (De Carvalho and Ettang 2011, 54).

### *The International Political Will Factor*

International political will has been lacking with respect to Darfur (Pattison 2008, 128). First, the varied political interests of the mediating external actors contributed to the ineffectiveness of the peace operations through policies heavy on compromise that were thus rendered weak (Knopf 2011, 2).

The Darfur Peace Agreement, which was seen by the international community as a landmark in the peace process but carried no penalty for ceasefire violations, shows how overly flexible negotiators were in accepting any sort of agreement (Birikorang 2009, 6).

Also not helping matters were events taking place in South Sudan. Despite being instrumental in the creation of UNAMID, the United States, along with other major powers, focused most of its diplomatic firepower on South Sudan's independence drive and largely abandoned efforts to enforce the raft of UN sanctions it devised to compel Sudan to stop abusing civilians in Darfur (Seymour 2014, 578–79). As soon as the United States stepped back from Darfur, the sanctions faded from everyone's attention, throwing the leverage back to the government of Sudan (Lynch 2014a, 2).

Darfur is considered a remote backwater and of no obvious strategic value to the United States and its allies (Lynch 2014b). With little or nothing at stake, the international community has hardly been committed enough; this has left the operation struggling. The AU's heavy dependence on foreign assistance for its operations gives these external benefactors the leverage to determine and approve AU missions (Warner 2015, 65). A major benefactor's lack of interest in a conflict such as Darfur may translate into its being less supportive of deployment of AU mechanisms to these places considered to be of little strategic importance. ASF deployments and sustenance will not free the AU of this external influence.

### **THE FAILURE IN CAR (MISCA)**

While the International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) was plagued by quite a number of issues, the lack of international political will, local participation, and cooperation of a domestic or local political elite rank paramount among the factors that hindered its capacity to succeed. If effectiveness in PSOs is dependent on force numbers and the quality of troops, then the combination of MISCA and French troops should have made for visible gains in CAR. The failed mission provides yet another demonstration that success in PSOs is not based on efficient military contingents.

### *The International Political Will Factor*

With a long history of mutual animosity and of fostering insurgencies in each other's territories, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), to which CAR belonged, was plagued by distrust among its member states. This phenomenon played a huge role in incapacitating MISCA (International Crisis Group 2011, 8). In what might be termed international noncooperation in CAR, the governments of Chad and Sudan had direct roles in supporting the Seleka rebels (Hanson 2007, 2; Ingerstad 2014b, 2).

In view of this unhealthy mixture of partners, whatever political support the AU might have attempted to offer was likely undermined by the interests and agendas of these states. This scenario buttresses the view that neighboring states have an impact on domestic conflict as well as on the outcomes of peace operations (Solomon 2012, 23; Curtis interview, 2014; Kromah interview 2015). An ASF or ACIRC would be as seriously handicapped as MISCA and the ongoing French military intervention in CAR (Operation Sangaris) had been in having no control over the interference of neighboring states.

### *The Domestic Politics / Local Political Elite Factor*

The crisis in CAR is part of a regional conflict complex, and internal governance and interaction among the state elite have exacerbated the conflict (Ingerstad 2014b, 2). "Much of CAR's present agony hinges on the fact that the best of its rulers have been no better than the continent's dismal mean" (*US News* 2013, 2). The government has not promoted development, life expectancy has remained the same for the past thirty years, and the average number of years spent in school is below seven. Given these statistics, scholars generally agree the conflict in CAR is the product of the failure of governance and the country's political elite (International Crisis Group 2013).

If the current conflict can be attributed to failure of governance, MISCA's success would have required a change in the poor governance among CAR's ruling and political elite. Beginning with its major players, indications were that deposed president François Bozizé was supporting the Anti-Balaka Christian militias with weapons and economic resources, publicly referring to them as patriots (Ingerstad 2014b, 2). The former transitional president, Catherine Samba-Panza, while extolling national reconciliation, did not drive for ethno-religious balance in the military and seems to have promoted nepotism in state appointments (Arieff 2014, 4). This perceived lack of

political will to right the wrongs of the past and steer a positive course for the future has helped perpetuate impunity for atrocities (Amnesty International 2014, 12).

When political elites opt to stay aloof from the problems of the state or perpetuate imbalance, they render peacekeeping operations impotent, with the rising levels of insecurity putting lives increasingly at risk. As Michael Shurkin and Stephanie Pezard put it, “The real salvation for CAR lies with the emergence of competent, trust-worthy and wise leadership” (*US News* 2013, 3).

### *The Local Participation Factor*

Peace authors have acknowledged the difficulty of promoting reconciliation in conflicts based on ethnic or religious schisms (Aall 2000, 131; Fortna 2004, 287), which further explains the inability of MISCA to put a lid on the crisis in CAR. The deepening animosity among the local population and the unwillingness of the different groups to come to terms incapacitated MISCA (*Guardian* 2013, 2–3). Accounts tell of the grim situation and how difficult it is for locals to contrive peace initiatives in such a divided and hate-filled society. Worse still, the same civilians needed to foster the peace are those stirring hate, as there is no differentiating them from the militia (Arieff 2014, 3; Wood 2014, 12–13). As noted by Major Augustine Migabo, a peacekeeping veteran with MISCA’s Rwandan contingent, “The biggest challenge is changing the mind-set of the people” (*Star* 2014, 17). Successfully doing so goes beyond the robustness and military efficiency of an intervention force.

## **SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT**

Notably, save for local participation (over which peacekeepers have some influence), the major factors adduced for the failure of AMIS/UNAMID and MISCA—international political will and local elite cooperation—stand outside the influence of peacekeeping contingents. They are arguably the most essential ingredients determining PSO outcomes (Strachan 2006, 36; Tardy 2011, 161). The AU has so far ignored the warning of Robert O. Collins in response to the UN goal of having 97 percent deployment in Darfur by 2009: “Even if the force consisted of the finest elite troops in the world, they could not have resolved the problem” (Hanson 2009, 2). In light of the major issues that led to the failure of the AU missions discussed earlier, an ASF or ACIRC obviously could have done little to change the outcome.

Since the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Peace Consolidation Mission in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX) in 2008, each succeeding international peace operation has been absorbed by a larger mission, as if the answer to CAR's crisis were reducible to a problem of force of numbers. This expansion has failed to influence the course of events (Boutellis and Williams 2013, 15; Vircoulon and Arnaud 2014). In similar fashion, the increase in Darfur's peacekeepers from 3,000 to 19,000 did not get the job done.

In short, military forces in general do not necessarily get the job done. Rather than spending so much time and resources on the ASF and the ACIRC, adequate attention should be paid to the more salient factors: international political will, local elite cooperation, and grassroots participation. In the event of the ASF's and the ACIRC's activation, they would also have to depend on these core factors to make any impact.

The essential factors discussed above exclude mandate. While a precise mandate was lacking in Darfur with AMIS/UNAMID, one was tailored to the mission in CAR; that MISCA was unsuccessful anyway indicates that, as important as mandate is to mission success, it is not as critical as the other three factors discussed here. Also not raised in this discussion is the issue of funding, which is often treated as central to PSO efficacy. The simple fact that AMIB, which was starved of funds, was successful indicates that peace operations can achieve their objectives even when poorly funded. AMIB's feat was due largely to the tenacious will of regional collaborators, especially South Africa, which pressured Burundi's political elite to cooperate toward ending the violence and forging ahead (Aboagye 2004, 14; Powell 2005, 28; Svensson 2008, 13).

The highlighting of Darfur and CAR in this discussion is not intended to downplay the importance of the ASF and the ACIRC, but to bring to the fore some seemingly neglected yet more important factors for effective PSOs. Peace scholars agree that national and local ownership are critical to ending conflicts and successfully implementing peace processes (Langholtz 2010, 48). The contribution of local content to the peace process should not be undermined, because "the means for managing and resolving conflict have always existed within social and cultural groups" (Duffey 2000, 143). The scholars contend that if peace operations are to be productive, civil society should be the primary target (Andrieu 2010, 537). Effective peacekeeping and post-conflict rebuilding can only be achieved through the active

participation of the local populace (Paffenholz and Spurk 2006, 34), including, of course, both the leaders and the led.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ASF AND ACIRC

Without doubt, PSOs have to be robust in today's conflict-ridden world, especially considering that the average cost of civil war is equivalent to more than thirty years of gross domestic product growth for a medium-sized country—a magnitude of damage that the 2011 *World Development Report* argues can be mitigated by PSOs (World Bank 2011, 5–6; Gowan 2011, 2). This is a compelling argument for maintaining large peacekeeping forces for the long term, but there are equally powerful financial and political reasons to cut them back.

For the AU, the latter wholly applies. For an organization whose resources are lean, yet that tries to deal with almost every aspect of life on the continent (Vines 2013, 95–96), it makes more sense to be cost effective in all pursuits. In the case of peacekeeping, sticking with its current ad hoc approach, which has been both successful and more cost effective, smacks of greater wisdom than maintaining a standby force—let alone two—that would not guarantee better results in the same enterprise.

Notably, PSOs have come to rely increasingly on military force to deter violence and maintain stability, but this does not necessarily mean the use of force is growing more effective (Gowan 2011, 2). The AU's focus on the actualization of the ASF and ACIRC indicates it is keeping with this trend. But the resources available could be invested in peace support programs more oriented to results:

Civil/military liaison assists in the promotion of the mission, the upholding of the mission aims and objectives, and the promulgation of positive and long-lasting solutions. . . . Negotiation and mediation are therefore likely to prove the primary and most potent means of developing peaceful, agreeable and lasting solutions to conflicts in all aspects of peacekeeping operations. (Goodwin 2005, 91)

Where the three factors of international political will, cooperation of domestic elites, and local participation are lacking, missions are wholly ineffective, but an ad hoc force can provide a practical alternative. The AU-authorized

Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) force, for example, comprising troops from Benin, Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, has had rapid success in flushing Boko Haram from Nigeria's northeast. Nigeria has gained the upper hand in arresting terrorism within its borders through an improvised arrangement with its neighbors and not a standby mechanism. This proves that the ad hoc approach works just fine.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AU**

The AU should acknowledge a standby force is not a panacea for conflict and spend time and resources developing the other factors that have a greater impact on PSO effectiveness: international political will, local elite cooperation, and local participation.

Rather than spend additional years trying to activate the ASF and ACIRC, the AU should apply the experience gained from planning these mechanisms to making its time-tested ad hoc approach more effective. Inasmuch as ad hoc measures of troop recruitment for PSOs have worked so far, the AU should concentrate on fine tuning strategies to make this measure more responsive for rapid deployment.

While military interventions enable the cessation of violence, it takes local elite cooperation and people's participation to build and consolidate the peace. To this end, the AU should endeavor to have adequate and relevant civilian expertise in mission areas to assist the host populations in fostering durable peace processes.

Where possible, the AU should endeavor to bridge the rivalry and animosity between states and institutions. This will go a long way in curbing some of the regional disturbances on the continent and keep lives secure.

Rather than take pride in drafting grand plans that it lacks the capacity to execute and that place it at the whim of its benefactors, the AU should content itself with making modest plans in line with its resources and thereby reduce reliance on external aid. This way, it will have a greater say in how its operations are run.

## CONCLUSION

The 2012 crisis in Mali and AU intervention exemplified the role of neighboring states (Algeria and Chad), subregional influence (ECOWAS), the lack of ASF machinery, and the success of the traditional ad hoc approach to intervention. In all, it was another success story for the AU, despite France's early effective lead role. Likewise, AFISMA's successful intervention, like those of its predecessors AMIB, MAES, and AMISOM, has been achieved without standby forces. This study serves as a reminder that the AU should have a rethink and, rather than embark on grandiose plans, should identify those factors that really influence PSO outcomes and plough its efforts into enhancing them.

This study attempts to give a head start in this direction by contending that international political will, civil society peace initiatives, and commitment of local political elites to sustaining the peace are the core elements of PSO successes. It is up to AU policymakers to devise means of ensuring the presence of these factors and enhancing them (or others) to foster stability. The peace operations failures of Darfur and CAR suggest that, under the prevailing circumstances in those mission areas, neither the ASF nor ACIRC would have made a difference. The corollary is that, for all the time and resources put into these intervention mechanisms, they are not prerequisites for AU peace operations success.

In the event that one of these intervention mechanisms does have to be activated, the problems and benefits of each, as described above, need to be weighed. Depending on what is to be achieved and how the problems can be adequately managed, the assessment here, as in other scholarly works, can help in the choice of which is more appropriate.

As the saying goes, however, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The AU's ad hoc approach to conflict intervention has worked just fine, and it will make more sense to improve on it while developing those other factors that have a greater impact on peace operations.

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## INTERVIEWS

Amuzu, Michael (retired colonel in Ghana's Armed Forces and head of Sudan Desk, AU Peace and Security Department), in the Office of the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission, African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at 3:30 p.m., April 2, 2014.

Bam, Sivuyile Thandikhaya (head, AU Peace Support Operations Division), in the Office of the Head of Peace Support Operations Division, African Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at 3 p.m., April 3, 2014.

Curtis, Tony (senior military advisor of the US Mission to the AU), at Paradise Garden, Adam's Pavillion, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at 10:35 a.m., April 5, 2014.

Ellery, James (retired brigadier, British Army; head of MONUC in 1999; UNAMSIL chief of staff in 2001; head of UNMISS in 2006), at Queens Gate,

SW7, London, at 11 a.m., November 15, 2013.

Kromah, Lamii Moivi (research fellow, Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations, International Peace Institute), via Skype, at 5 p.m., March 4, 2015.

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